

Hayward linebacker honored as top prep

NOV 28 1979

HAYWARD—Today is Wednesday and the Miramonte offensive line has yet to find Hayward linebacker Jack Del Rio. That's shocking, considering that the Matador-Farmer game was over at approximately 7:40 p.m. last Friday night. But the Mats never did see him on defense.

Rather they felt him, time after bone-jarring time. It was Del Rio's everywhere-at-once defensive play that enabled Hayward to overcome a stiff Miramonte challenge to win the North Coast Section 2A title, 12-10, at the Oakland Coliseum. It also earned him The Tribune's Prep of the Week award.

It wasn't just Del Rio's nine solo tackles and two assisted tackles that gored the Mats, but his location. Sometimes he would line up nose-to-nose with the center, other times he would be over a guard or tackle. Or he might be five yards back, waiting to stunt or blitz. Miramonte never knew.

"He does that by design," said Hayward coach Gary Clark. "He

got that kind of talent, speed, size and quickness to play inside or outside. If he were a mold, a coach could reproduce him and not worry about winning.

"We can just turn him loose and it takes pressure off of our secondary. There were not many deep passes completed against us, except for the ones (Miramonte's Bryan) McKeen threw, and that was a beautiful drive."

When the going got tough for Hayward inside the opponents 10-yard line, Del Rio was felt on offense. Utilized in the Farmer "heavy" (full house) offense, Del Rio carried the ball 23 times for 86 yards and scored two touchdowns. One was an important score against Encinal in the NCS semifinal game.

Del Rio is an athlete, averaging in double figures as a guard-foward for the Farmer basketball team and catching on the baseball squad.

But defense is where Del Rio's at, with a team-leading 130 tackles (including assists), three

fumble recoveries, one interception and a school-record 17 quarterback sacks. One Angry Man.

"Jack had a very consistant year," Clark summed up. "He was a good player last year and he also gives you 100 percent game after game. He is an outstanding defensive player."

Miramonte would agree.—

Scott Strain

Hayward

REC 1 1979

Del Rio caught runners hard

Everywhere that ball carriers went, Jack Del Rio was sure to go. Catchy, eh?

But Del Rio, the aggressive linebacker from Hayward, didn't simply catch enemy ball carriers and quarterbacks, he smothered them.

For that reason, the 6-2, 217-pound junior linebacker has been picked as the Tribune's Player of the Year of the Year in the Hayward Area Athletic League.

Del Rio was at his best in the North Coast Section 2A championships, stuffing the Encinal offense in the the Farmers' semifinal win and then cracking Miramonte in the championship final.

Everywhere the Mats went in that game, Del Rio was sure to go, getting nine solo tackles plus two assists and knocking Matador quarterback Bryan McKeen out of the game with a broken collarbone. It was a crunching tackle, but legal. That's De Rio's game—tough but clean.

The Miramonte game was just a culmination of what Del Rio did all season for Hayward (130 tackles and assists), as the Farmers beat back challenges from Marina, Mt. Eden and Sunset to win the HAAL crown with a 7-0 record.

Much of the credit goes to the Farmer defense. Much of the defensive credit goes to Del Rio.

"He's got the kind of talent, speed and quickness to play inside or outside," said Hayward coach Gary Clark. "If he were a mold, a coach could reproduce him and not worry about winning."

Del Rio plays the "Monster Man," on defense, where he can line up almost anywhere he pleases. He can be nose-to-nose with the center, off tackle against the tackle or guard or five yards back, waiting to stunt or blitz. Usually he just goes with the flow.

Hayward's Jack Del Rio one of Eastbay's finest athletes

By Peter Clark
Tribune Staff Writer

JUN 1 1980

HAYWARD — He has the face of Robert Redford, the body of Paul Bunyan, the athletic ability of John Henry Johnson and the explosiveness of Mt. St. Helens.

His name is Jack Del Rio, and he may be the finest three-sport high school athlete the Eastbay has produced since John Henry terrorized Pittsburg High opponents in the late 1940s.

A Tribune poll six years ago picked Johnson as the greatest prep athlete in Eastbay history.

An assistant coach at USC says Del Rio, a linebacker, will be the most-recruited football player west of the Mississippi when he is graduated from Hayward High School next year.

The 6-4, 225-pound Del Rio is only a junior, doesn't know yet what college he'll attend or whether he'll emphasize football, baseball or basketball. His three coaches say he can make it in any of those sports.

"Jack is just one of those nasty kids who likes to hit people," said Hayward football coach Gary Clark.

"By nasty, I don't mean Jack goes around hitting old ladies or throwing rocks at dogs. He's just tough and aggressive. He comes by it naturally. The whole Del Rio family is known around Hayward for its combativeness."

Jack himself is proud of the family reputation.

"I come from a family of hot tempers," he said. "I've learned to control mine better than my uncles ever did. I understand they're famous for getting into fights. And, as far as I know, they don't lose too many."

Del Rio, a 17-year-old blond with Spanish blood coursing through his veins, left his mark on Bryan McKeen in the North Coast Section 2-A championship football game. The Miramonte quarterback passed Hayward dizzy for a 10-0 lead until he suffered a broken collarbone from a blitzing Del Rio sack.

"That was a clean hit," Del Rio maintained without sounding the least remorseful. "I just cracked him real hard. It's all part of the game."

"I probably shouldn't even have been playing in that game. I had a temperature in excess of 102 degrees and a lump in my neck from a virus. Every time that lump got hit, I felt it. But we won."

Hayward rallied for two second-half touchdowns after the injury to McKeen for a 12-10 victory.

To keep college recruiters from destroying his private life, Del Rio has narrowed his choices of football schools down to six: USC, Cal, UCLA, Notre Dame, Nebraska and Washington.

But Del Rio may never play college football because his first love is basketball.

"I've been playing basketball since I was three years old, and I really love the sport," Del Rio said. "And I don't think I can play both football and basketball at the college level."

Del Rio isn't considered the best prep basketball player in the state, but his credentials are impressive.

He averaged more than 17 points and eight rebounds a game as one of the bulkier point guards in the United States. He was named to the All-Northern California team and scored 32 points in a North Coast Section playoff game against Irvington.

"We were ranked as the state's No. 1 2-A team, and Jack had a lot to do with that," said Hayward basketball coach Charley Kendall. "He can do it all on a basketball court. He handles the ball well at guard, is both an excellent passer and shooter and a fine rebounder."

"Jack is the best all-around athlete I've ever seen. It's not just his strength but also his intelligence. He's a superb team player. The Pac-10 basketball schools are really interested in him."

Baseball scouts are interested in Del Rio, too. They've heard about the kid, who as a 15-year-old in the Babe Ruth League, once hit a ball more than 450 feet.

Del Rio's baseball stats are frightening. The .333 batting average doesn't look that impressive until it's combined with his 5-1 pitching record and 1.21 ERA.

In his last three pitching starts, Del Rio shut out Mt. Eden, 1-0; beat

Tennyson in the HAAL championship game, 3-0, on a four-hitter; and threw a three-hitter in blanking Mission San Jose, 7-0, in an NCS playoff game.

"Jack has untapped potential in baseball," said Hayward coach Jim Bisenius. "His best position is catcher. That's probably where he would play in the majors if he ever decided to go into professional baseball."

Del Rio, a 3.2 student, insists he wants to go to college and get a good education, which probably means a major league baseball team won't be able to offer enough money to lure him from the campus of his choice.

"If I play football in college, then I'll play college baseball, too," Del Rio said. "Those two sports don't conflict. Otherwise, it will just be basketball and the books."

All-American boy

By Scott Strain
Tribune Staff Writer

JAN 4 1981

HAYWARD — When Jack Del Rio was a sophomore linebacker at Hayward High, he was good. As a junior he was better. Now, as a senior, he's the best. All-Eastbay. All Northern-California. Not even Parade Magazine could pass him by.

Del Rio, the Eastbay's Player of the Year for two straight years and voted Northern California's Defensive Player of the Year this past season, is Parade's pick as the best high school linebacker in the United States. The full All-American team is in today's Parade Magazine section in the Sunday Tribune.

Other Californians named to the team were quarterback Sean Salisbury of Orange Glen High in Escondido, running back Michael Alo of Banning in Wilmington, lineman Larry Williams of Mater Dei in Santa Ana and defensive back Elbert Watts of Venice.

Parade did almost pass Del Rio by personally — when contacted by the Tribune, he didn't know about this particular award. He just knew something was up.

"I knew I was picked for something, but I didn't know what," Del Rio said. "It's fun to get these awards."

The All-America recognition is only one of Del Rio's goals. He wants to attain A-A status in basketball and baseball, his two other favorite sports. The hoops are in season now and Del Rio, with his 20-point-per game-average, just might be All-America material again.

The 6-foot-4, 230-pound roving linebacker is now prime NCAA recruitment beef. He's so good that he is a walking violation for some overanxious, win-at-all-costs university that has bowl dreams dancing in its head.

So it comes down to what every recruiter from any school wants to have: **A DECISION.**

Is Jack leaning toward UCLA, Southern Cal, Notre Dame or any one of the Top Ten schools? How about Cal? Could it be Stanford?

He's not saying. No decision will be made until after basketball season is over. And With the talent on the current Farmer team (9-3 record, No. 12 ranking), that decision could come as late as the middle of March, when the North Coast Section playoffs and the state tournament are over. That's a long time to keep people hanging.

But Del Rio is firm on this point and his words hit like a hard tackle.

"I will make my decision after basketball season. Baseball is not involved because I think that I can play both football and baseball in college. If I decide to play basketball then that would be different.

"All the scouts know this is what I'm going to do, so there is no pressure to make any type of decision now. Anyway, I know what they all have to offer."

Even with his decision not to decide widely known, Del Rio still gets a barrage of 'Do you remember us?' calls from around the country. He and his father have had to install a few privacy safeguards not unknown to other blue-chip athletes.

"This can get really wild at times," Del Rio said. "I stay away from the phone and just go upstairs. The coaches protect me and we do have an answering service here.

"Everyone is persistent, but I guess you have to be. Persistence, though, will not affect my decision."

Football opponents were also persistent; they

kept passing and running away from him on the field. Linebackers like Del Rio, though, are always in the middle of the thick.

His game is *control*, which can be compared to that of a Kenny Easley or Lester Hayes. Del Rio can throw his body into a hole at the line of scrimmage or drop back and clog passing lanes. Blessed with tremendous mobility and lateral pursuit, he can chase down and tackle the quickest of backs. He dictates what happens on the field.

"The college scouts have told me that they're thinking of me as a strongside inside linebacker," Del Rio said. "I think I'm a Ted Hendricks-type of linebacker. I like the way he plays, the way he can control a game. I like to control the game.

"But they (the scouts) still think of me as an inside linebacker, which means I'll be hitting the guards. How will I do? Well, there are some pretty big guards out there."

Linebacker is the most demanding position on defense. Being one means being a little schizoid — a mean batterer on the defensive line, a cheetah in the defensive secondary. With good linebacking, teams can hide defensive deficiencies. With bad linebacking, they can't camouflage a thing.

When Del Rio's on 'D', teams can forget about offensive tendencies. *He's* the tendency. Hayward Coach Gary Clark made him a roving linebacker, so offenses could (and did) run into him anywhere. Tackle. End. Nose guard. Inside

linebacker. Outside linebacker. Where do you play a Jack Del Rio? Anywhere he wants.

"Jack is just one of those nasty kids who like to hit people," Clark said.

"By nasty, I don't mean Jack goes around hitting old ladies or throwing rocks at dogs. He's just tough and aggressive. He comes by it naturally. The whole Del Rio family is known around Hayward for its combativeness."

"I come from a family of hot tempers," Del Rio said. "I've learned to control mine better than my uncles ever did. I understand they're famous for getting into fights. And, as far as I know, they don't lose too many."

And, ooohhh, along with his field ferocity, does he look like an All-American. Blond and muscular. A great smile. One reporter promised a picture of him to a statistician from Pinole Valley last season in return for phoning in games. She never missed one.

So Parade has finally swept Jack up and he's marching, maybe to *Fight On*, *The Hills of Westwood*, *Come Join the Band*, or *Hail to California*.

Del Rio might be, as one Southern Cal assistant coach said, the most-recruited football player west of the Mississippi. He's got what every coach is looking for: size, quickness and grades.

Six years ago, the Tribune selected John Henry Johnson of Pittsburg High as the greatest prep athlete in Eastbay history.

Here's another opinion: Move over John Henry, Jack's comin' through.

Del Rio earns new honor

By Scott Strain
Tribune Sports Writer

Jack Del Rio, Hayward High's two-time Eastbay Player of the Year, has been picked as football co-player of the Year in Northern California.

Del Rio shares player-of-the-year honors with Kevin Willhite, junior running back from Cordova High in Rancho Cordova.

Del Rio, a 6-foot-4, 230-pound

linebacker, was one of 22 Eastbay players selected for the team team by a panel of NorCal sportswriters.

Other Eastbay players selected for All-NorCal honors include quarterbacks Jack Trudeau of Granada, Clark Sorenson of San Ramon and running backs James Terrell of St. Patrick's and Pittsburg's Dewayne Coleman.

See PREP STARS, Page F-2

Trudeau was the Eastbay's top quarterback statistically, throwing for 2,229 yards and 22 touchdowns. Terrell was the top Eastbay running back, rushing for 1,317 yards and 19 touchdowns.

Also named were receivers Rob Lambert of De La Salle, Randy Grant of Granada and John Henze of San Ramon.

Lambert was the Eastbay's top receiver with 61 passes for 876 yards and 13 touchdowns. Grant and Henze each caught 55 passes for over 1,000 yards. Grant caught 11 touchdown passes, Henze eight. Del Rio and defensive end Junior Tautala-tasti of Encinal are among the top Eastbay players on the defensive team.

Five Eastbay defensive backs made the team including Casey Casebolt of St. Patrick's, Jay Lawson of St. Mary's, Clarence Martin of Kennedy-Richmond, Mark Pelletier of Ygnacio Valley and Bill Thomas of Mission San Jose.



DAVE NEWHOUSE

Sunrise, sunset

FEB 16 1981

For Phil Chenier, it's possibly the end. He had better be prepared. For Jack Del Rio, it's only the beginning. But he had better be prepared too.

Chenier and Del Rio are athletes, one aging, the other just feeling the bloom on the rose. Both are experiencing trying times.

Chenier worries that his basketball career is over and can he endure the painful withdrawal. Del Rio is deciding where to attend college. Although this hardly compares with Chenier's current agony, it's an important decision nonetheless.

Del Rio is a three-sport star, a high school All-American. He is considered special by the many colleges that want him. Now he is about to choose the one he wants. Because it's a decision he will live with for four years, he must be careful.

Phil Chenier wishes he had four more years, knowing that Father Time is tapping him on the shoulder. Chenier is only 30, but two back operations have robbed his once premier skills. After fighting back to earn a comeback, with the Warriors, Chenier tore a hamstring muscle. It doesn't seem fair, and it isn't, but who said life was fair?

Del Rio the young phenom

Jack Del Rio, the hero of Hayward High, is too good to be true. He reached manhood (6-4, 230 pounds) at the tender age of 17. He can do it all.

He is a football All-American, a linebacker who hits savagely and can run. In basketball, he can get you 20 points a game, and maybe 20 rebounds too as few test his brawn on the boards. In baseball, the scouts think he can become another Thurman Munson.

His future isn't basketball, because 6-4 forwards play at UC-Davis, not UCLA. Major-league baseball will have to take its chances, because Del Rio is going to college first. Baseball's only hope, it seems, would be if Del Rio is hurt playing football.

He pictures himself as another Ted Hendricks, free-wheeling on the outside, knocking down quarterbacks and blocking kicks. However, those universities who covet Del Rio envision him as an inside linebacker like Matt Millen, nasty, competitive and unyielding.

Who will get him? Supposedly, it's between USC and Stanford, with California trying for a home-court advantage. Del Rio is getting much advice, but it has to be his decision. Does he want to play before mom and dad or does he consider the Rose Bowl more important?

It's a question of priorities. Because USC is stronger year in and year out than Stanford and Cal, would Del Rio be happier as a Trojan? Possibly. How much will education influence his decision? It might.

Del Rio has everything going for him. Very soon, USC will announce that it has the next Chip Banks. Or Stanford will claim it has the next Jeff Siemon. Or Cal will boast of the next Les Richter. There will be much fanfare.

But, Del Rio has one, uncomfortable factor to consider: so many high school heroes turn into faded memories after picking the wrong school. The bloom can come off the rose in a hurry. It's a big moment in the life of young Jack Del Rio.

Chenier the aging hero

Thirteen years ago, Phil Chenier was as sought after a prep athlete as Del Rio. Chenier was an All-American too, in basketball. A Cal coach said Chenier was one of the 10 best prospects in the country, just as a Cal coach today said that Del Rio fits into the same category.

Cal won the recruiting battle for Chenier, but the Berkeley High whiz stayed only three years. He was a different player then, one who couldn't control his shooting touch or his temper. There was a burning fury inside Chenier to succeed. Once he calmed down his temper and developed that outside jumper, he became a player who could flat destroy opponents.

He was a hardship pick of the then Baltimore Bullets and became a starter as a rookie. One year later, he poured in 53 points for a Bullets single-game record.

From 1972 through 1976, Chenier averaged 19.7 points and was named to three NBA all-star teams. During that period, he may have been the finest guard in basketball. The only thing that stopped him was that mysterious, hard-to-defense opponent well-known to mankind: the human back.

Chenier was sent from Washington to Indiana to hospital surgery. The Warriors gave him another try after a year layoff. He was running down-court against the Utah Jazz, a team he would have buried before breakfast five years ago, when he suddenly fell to the floor.

It was the hamstring, not the back, though it didn't matter. The Warriors were already concerned about Chenier's lack of mobility and quickness, although he could still scorch the net. Sideline again, he has lost more valuable time in which to show he can still play. Meanwhile, the Warriors signed a younger Joe Hassett and ...

Chenier is through for the year and maybe forever. He will be invited back to camp almost certainly, but by then it may be too late.

As he is learning, and Jack Del Rio will someday learn, it doesn't last forever.

Del Rio to sign, leaning to UCLA

FEB 24 1981

Jack Del Rio, the most sought after high school athlete in the Eastbay and one of the top 10 football prospects in the country, is leaning toward signing a letter of intent with UCLA, it was learned today.

Del Rio has scheduled a 2:30 p.m. press conference Wednesday at Hayward High to announce his decision.

A source close to the situation told The Tribune today that Del Rio has narrowed his choices to UCLA, USC and Stanford. The source

See DEL RIO, Page D-2

said he doubts Del Rio has the grades to qualify for Stanford and that UCLA has the edge over USC.

USC assistant publicist Tim Tessalone said his school still is "very interested" in Del Rio, but he didn't know of any new development in the recruiting situation and was unaware of the press conference in Hayward.

Notre Dame, Nebraska and California were high on Del Rio's list, but he later canceled a scheduled visit to Cal and dropped the other two schools from his preferential list.

Del Rio, 6-4 and 230 pounds, is a three-sport letterman at Hayward High. He has starred in football, basketball and baseball.

A roving linebacker, he was named to Parade Magazine's prep All-America team in football after earning recognition as The Tribune's East-bay Athlete of the Year two years in a row. He also was named to the All-Northern California team the past two years.

A sore knee has kept him out of recent basketball games, but he has been averaging nearly 20 points a game for the Farmers, who are undefeated in the Hayward Area Athletic League.

As a catcher and pitcher in baseball last spring, he helped his team reach the semifinals of the North Coast Section.

Del Rio decides to sign letter of intent for USC

By Ron Bergman and Marv Wamble
Tribune Staff Writers

HAYWARD — Jack Del Rio, the most sought-after Eastbay high school athlete in years, has decided to attend USC, sources confirmed today.

Del Rio was scheduled to make the announcement himself during a press conference today at Hayward High School, where he has starred in

football, baseball and basketball for the past three years.

The decision by the 6-foot-4, 230-pound Del Rio disappointed many colleges throughout the country who were mainly interested in him as a football player, and not just because his blond good-looks would make a nice cover for a press guide.

See DEL RIO, Page F-2

Del Rio's football accomplishments include being named to a high school All-American team by Parade Magazine, which called him the best prep linebacker in the country. He also has been named The Oakland Tribune's Eastbay High School Football Player of the Year for the past two years and the Northern California Defensive Player of the Year for the 1980 season.

That's why he was pursued so eagerly by many colleges including Cal, Stanford, UCLA, Nebraska and Notre Dame.

"It's too cold at Notre Dame," Del Rio said Tuesday night in an interview conducted at his home.

Del Rio originally wanted to wait until the end of basketball season before making his announcement. But the recruiting pressure became too much.

"I'm getting tired of this game," Del Rio said, referring to recruiting. "I just had enough."

Del Rio made his decision Monday night. Sources at Stanford said that Cardinal head football Coach Paul Wiggin was told by Del Rio that he was going to USC.

In anticipation of the announcement, assistant football coaches from USC had scheduled flights northward to be at Del Rio's press conference.

"The kid made a visit here and told us he was coming to USC," an USC assistant baseball coach said today.

Del Rio was a catcher and pitcher for Hayward High. He hit .333 for the Hayward High Farmers last season and his 5-1 pitching record included three shutouts.

He is expected to play baseball as well as football in college. He apparently has abandoned his ambitions to play college basketball.

At Hayward High, he averaged 18 points and seven rebounds a game before an injured knee forced him to the bench three weeks ago. He is expected to return to action Thursday for the Hayward Area Athletic League playoff final.

"Too many people were talking about how I should be going to UC-Davis to play basketball and not UCLA because I was a 6-4 forward," Del Rio said. "I didn't like that. I'm a guard and I could play in the Pac-10."

"I was thinking about playing basketball. But not enough coaches expressed an interest. It's too late now. I'm going to play football and baseball."

Del Rio decides on Trojans

By Pat Frizzell
Tribune Staff Writer

FEB 26 1981

HAYWARD — Jack Del Rio, an exceptionally versatile athlete sought by more than 200 colleges from all over the country, announced Wednesday that he will attend the University of Southern California.

"I felt that was the place I was meant to go," Del Rio said after signing a letter of intent at a press conference in the Hayward High School cafeteria.

"They're a school of champions. I'm from a school of champions."

The blond Del Rio, 6-feet-4, 225 pounds, will play both football and baseball at USC. At Hayward High he has been outstanding in both sports, as a linebacker and a pitcher-catcher-outfielder. He also is the Farmers' leading basketball scorer and rebounder.

"I liked UCLA and Nebraska a lot," said Del Rio, who will be 18 on April 4. "But there's just something about USC, where you're surrounded by great players."

"USC has a great business school, and I'm interested in that. Its campus is smaller than others, centrally located in Los Angeles. I liked the coaching staff and the players I met."

Del Rio and his father, Jack Sr., spent from last Saturday through Monday of this week at USC. The outstanding athlete said he made up his mind Sunday night and told his father then.

"I told Artie Gigantino, USC's linebacker coach, on Monday," Jack Jr. said.

Gigantino and Marv Goux, USC assistant head coach, attended the cafeteria conference, along with some members of the Del Rio family, a few friends and Hayward High coaches.

"We're really, really excited about having Jack at USC," said Goux, in his 25th year on the Trojan staff. "There are just a few super players in the country. He's one of them."

Gigantino, a former California assistant, said he was "as excited about this one as about any player I've ever recruited anywhere."

"Jack can play any place in the United States as a freshman," Gigantino added.

Del Rio said Hayward High football Coach Gary Clark and line coach Jeff Rankin screened inquiries and letters from most of the 200-plus schools that tried to land him. Jack narrowed the possibilities to six —



Jack Del Rio with father, Jack Del Rio Sr., announce USC decision.

Tribune photo by Leo Cohen

USC, UCLA, Stanford, California, Notre Dame and Nebraska.

"Then it came down to USC, UCLA and Stanford," he said. "I couldn't have made a bad choice from among those."

Del Rio visited all five of the out-of-area campuses. He said Stanford accepted him as a potential student last week but "they really didn't show enough interest before that."

Del Rio's father said Jack Jr. had good enough grades for acceptance to Stanford and he liked Stanford Coach Paul Wiggin "but the matter was out of Wiggin's hands, and when Stanford accepted him it was too late."

Jack Jr. said he would have chosen USC in any event.

Jack is a B student, according to Hayward Coach Rankin "and unquestionably is the best athlete here in the 16 years I've been at this school."

Del Rio said all the colleges he

considered told him he could play both football and baseball.

"I think it will be a challenge to make the starting lineup in football as a freshman," Del Rio said. "SC told me if I'm good enough to start, I'll start."

"I don't want anything automatic. I wanted to go where I'll have to work by butt off, and I expect to."

In football, Del Rio, as an inside linebacker, will play the position at which he has helped Hayward High finish unbeaten in its league the past two years and win the North Coast Sectional title in 1979.

Jack also has been used for a few offensive plays, at fullback and tight end.

In baseball, Jack said he believes catching is his forte and he hopes to catch for USC. He expects to be selected in the June major-league baseball draft. "Hopefully I'll have a shot some day at either pro football or pro

baseball," he said. "But that's a long way down the road."

Although he won't try to play basketball at USC because of the overlapping of seasons, Del Rio said he is certain he could have played varsity basketball at the college level, too.

"I don't think people know what I can do with a basketball," he said.

A bruised ligament and muscle on his right knee have kept him on the bench for several games, but Jack is scheduled to return to Hayward's basketball lineup against Mt. Eden High in the HAAL League playoffs tonight. In spite of his size, Del Rio is a guard.

"I weigh 225 pounds now," he said, "but I should be lighter for basketball."

For football at USC Del Rio may weigh as much as 240 or 245 pounds, in the opinion of his father and his high school coaches.

"We didn't make any big deal about Jack's weight," said Gigantino, who made USC's previously permitted two fall and winter recruiting visits to Del Rio.

"He can play baseball and miss spring football practice and it shouldn't affect his football chances. The important thing is that he works hard to get in shape in the summer."

Gigantino pointed out that Del Rio originally planned not to sign a letter of intent until after the basketball season "but it became a burden on him to wait."

The coach said the Trojans learned about Del Rio's prowess and promise when he was a high school sophomore and have been interested since.

They were so interested that such former USC football greats as O.J. Simpson and Brad Budde talked with him on his campus visit last weekend. So did Jeff Brown, who made the USC varsity last fall as a linebacker and now is No. 2 catcher on the Trojans' varsity baseball team.

"O.J. told me some things about the school, and I knew he came from San Francisco," Del Rio said. "But by then I already had decided on USC."

USC Coach John Robinson is in Egypt on a vacation, so Goux said he was representing him at the press conference.

Del Rio lives with his father, a Hayward High fullback and linebacker in the mid-1950s, and three of his four brothers. Jeff, 16, and Jamie, 15, attend Hayward High. Another brother, Jason, 12, resides with Jack's mother in San Ramon.

RALPH WILEY



FEB 26 1981

Does father know best?

HAYWARD — *We live through our children.* It is an unfortunate truth. We would rather not say we live vicariously through our young. It seems to admit our own failures and broken dreams.

The strong parental instinct to protect, counsel and direct offspring cannot always be put aside when the child reaches maturity. This instinct can grow monstrous. Then come tragedies like Little League, mama's boys and pushy fathers.

My son was born to play for UCLA. Kenny Fields is an hellacious basketball player. He is 6-foot-8 and 18 years old. He is old enough to make his own decisions and young enough to recover from them if they are wrong. He went to UCLA, but because he was a freshman and inexperienced, he was not getting yeoman playing time under Coach Larry Brown. He did not complain as much as his father, Don, did. Because of Don's outrage, Brown put Fields off the team. Don was furious. He said his son was born to play for UCLA.

How sad this is for Kenny. Even though he has been reinstated, it is his life, not Don's. He was not born to play basketball. Kenny can't say this to Don. Don is his father. They are blood, and it is thicker than water. But perhaps blood can be too thick. People have choked on their own blood before.

The Del Rios

Jack Del Rio the Younger is 17 years old, 6-4, 225 pounds and one of the best athletes to ever play in Northern California. Wednesday, he signed a letter-of-intent to attend USC. Del Rio decided to play football and USC is the football school.

Jack Del Rio the Elder is 44, the owner of his own construction business and the father of three other sons. Wednesday, he peered blissfully over his eldest son's shoulder as the letter was signed in the teacher's cafeteria at Hayward High School.

Del Rio the Elder's joy was more apparent than the Younger's. The Elder has had the opportunity to reflect on the Fields matter, a situation that faces any parent like himself. It faced Dolph Schayes when he came out the stands and charged the referee who called fouls on his son. It faced Gloria Connors when she realized that her precious Jimmy would lose on certain days.

What does Del Rio the Elder think of this?

"I really don't know that much about the Fields matter," said Del Rio the Elder. "But I think (the dismissal of Fields from the team) could have been done in a little better taste."

Del Rio the Elder does not seem overly protective of the Younger. He is very proud of the other boys too. Perhaps that helps some. He spoke of Jeff (16) and James (15) in the same voice as Jack, but athletically Jack is more gifted, much more. His brothers are average-sized, and they will play in a very large shadow from now on. It will be difficult for them in athletics, because they are the brothers of Jack Del Rio the Superathlete.

Del Rio the Elder is a large man himself, deep-chested, with large arms and hands. He is a man of concrete and brick and it shows on him.

"I'm going to hang onto this pen," said Del Rio the Elder. "I'm glad it's over with."

"I tried not to involve myself with Jack's choice of a school. He is gonna be there for four years. Not me. He told me Monday night, and I honored the decision. I'm very happy."

"I think my refrigerator is what helped him grow. He loved basketball, but he had to think of the future. He asked me, 'Dad, what do you think?' I told him I thought he'd grow too big for it."

"Artie Gigantino (USC recruiter), I've been playing with him for about a year. All the recruiters I talked to were very good people, very good. Jack asked me to help him. He said, 'Dad, ask the coaches if they will back up and let me rest. Please tell them to keep away from me.' I really neglected my business, I'll tell you that. I wanted to be close by in case he needed some help."

"I will probably see every home game USC plays for the next four years."

Del Rio the Younger:

"Dad asked me if I would like him to help me, and I said yes," said Del Rio the Younger. There was a measured tone to his voice, and a challenging look in his wide-open blue eyes which said he would make his own choices in the end.

"He didn't tell me where to go, but I know inside him he's happy I chose USC. I feel it."

It is good to heed the voice of experience. It is

Continued from Page F-1

also good to live your own life. The balance is delicate. People who live for their children are ultimately crushed because the children must one day live for themselves. Children who live for their parents are stunted when their own lives do not turn out as they would have liked. Neither seems to be the case with the Del Rios.

"I'm happy," said Del Rio the Younger, the Superathlete. "That's what is most important."

Whatever the source, the lesson was learned.



The coach referred to as Thomas Richardson of Bushrod Park in Wednesday's column (The Natural) is actually named Hank Thomasson. But the fine job he has done with the baseball youth of North Oakland remains the same.

BRIEFS

Del Rio a Playboy pick

NSA WED AUG 15 1984
Former three-sport Hayward High Star Jack Del Rio has been selected as a preseason All-American linebacker by Playboy Magazine in its annual September "Pigskin Preview" issue. De Rio, a senior at the University of Southern California, led the team in tackles last season and was named to the All-Pac-10 defensive team. De Rio was an Eastbay all-star in football, basketball and baseball while attending Hayward. As a junior, he led Hayward to the North Coast Section 2A football championship.

out Hayward's Del Rio at Southern Cal

By Ron Bergman
Tribune Staff Writer

AUG 25 1983

LOS ANGELES — They worship a linebacker in the land of the tailback and his name is Jack Del Rio.

He has the face and physique of a Greek or Roman god, a blond-haired hunkus Americanus. He could pose for a statue. If he stood still long enough, he could be a statue.

But Del Rio isn't getting by on his looks at the University of Southern California where the second unit usually could beat any of the bottom five teams in the Pac-10. He's big enough at 6-foot-4 and 235 pounds and agile enough to have been named to the Playboy pre-season All-America team as a junior.

So for those of you who wonder how Del Rio has gotten along since he left Hayward High in a blaze of publicity, the answer is he's getting along fine. He made all-conference and all-coast last year as a sophomore even though he played the entire season with what he says was a shoulder separation.

His full-uniformed figure graces one-half the official USC football poster for this season. The opposite half belongs to Keith Browner, the other outside linebacker.

"He's been subjected to great pre-season publicity, more than any other player on the team," according to defensive coordinator Artie Gigantino, who helped recruit Del Rio. "His attitude is that everyone knows he's getting all that publicity so everyone is going to play harder against him. That's why he's working harder this year."

Gigantino spoke Wednesday in the football office upstairs at Heritage Hall. Trophies fill the downstairs lobby, including the four Heismans won by Mike Garrett, O.J. Simpson, Charles White and Marcus Allen—all tailbacks.

The lack of an outstanding tailback casts a question mark over this Trojan team that lost exactly half its starters following John Robinson's last year. It's up to former offensive coordinator Ted Tollner to put the pieces together in his first year at the helm.

He won't have to worry about outside linebacker. Robinson took care of that in 1980 when he paid the only in-season recruiting trip of his seven-year career to a prospect's house. That house was Del Rio's on Hidden Lane in Hayward. Hidden describes it. Leading the way, Gigantino got lost and knocked on a



neighbor's door by mistake.

The mailman knew where the Del Rios lived. His hernia told him after carrying letters and brochures from nearly every football school in the country.

"I finally narrowed it to six schools after my junior year and had my dad and coach screen out all the others," Del Rio said. "I really liked Nebraska, but that was too far away. I'm a California boy and SC plays the type of tough, hard-hitting defense I like."

Del Rio's value to the Trojans was proven by his absence for all but the first three plays in last season's opener at Florida because of the shoulder injury. Troy was upset, 17-7, when the Gators started throwing and running to the side where Del Rio wasn't. Although he didn't miss any more games, he never really recovered from the injury, which also hampered his throwing as a catcher on the USC baseball team.

Del Rio still managed to hit the little ball for an average of .319. Against large people in football, he was responsible for 76 tackles, five for losses against Arizona State alone.

These type of performances fulfilled the promise he showed in his initial season when Robinson said, "I've never had a freshman have a better first year than Del Rio."

Despite his new-found fame, Del Rio still listens to his daddy, Jack Sr., who raised the family in a motherless home. Junior has to bum rides to the beaches to ride his boogie board over the waves because his father wants him to concentrate on studies and football.

"My dad took the car away from me and gave it to my younger brother, James," Del Rio said. "I'll

get one when I graduate. Let's put it this way: I'll get a car when I can afford to buy one of my own."

In the meantime, Del Rio is keeping his eye on twin goals.

"I'd hope to be an All-American in my senior year in both football and baseball," he said. "I'm on schedule, I guess you'd have to say."

NOTES — The only way to see USC in the Bay Area this year is to

attend the game at Cal, Oct. 29. The Trojans can't be on TV for two seasons and can't go to a bowl until after next season because departed assistant Marv Goux sold tickets for the players and gave them the cash, according to the NCAA . . . That red-shirt freshman defensive back named L.C. Brock is none other than Lou Brock Jr., son of the former great base stealer for St. Louis.

Tomorrow: UCLA



NICK APR 21 1984

PETERS

If the United States doesn't have one of its best amateur catchers on the Olympic baseball team, you can blame it on Del Rio. That would be Jack Del Rio, the former Hayward prep superstar who likely will spurn a

chance to play in the 1984 Games so he can concentrate on his senior football season at Southern Cal.

Del Rio, a 6-foot-4, 240-pound defensive end/outside linebacker, doubles as a hard-hitting (.350-plus) catcher for the Trojans. His baseball coach is Rod Dedeaux, who also will guide the U.S. into Olympics action at Dodger Stadium, so it's not too difficult to figure out that Jack would enjoy an advantage if he elected to spend the summer playing ball.

Instead, he'll be grunting and groaning on a weight-training program, approaching his final college football season with added vigor. A two-time All-Coast performer, Del Rio is being groomed as an All-America and a high NFL draft choice. The Trojans are also talking about a Lombardi Trophy, the award that goes to the nation's finest lineman.

Consequently, Del Rio has placed his priorities in order. The Olympics would be nice, thank you, but Jack would just as soon think about sacking quarterbacks and helping USC snap back from last year's 4-6-1 disaster. He doesn't seem headed for a John Elway-type predicament because it's quite apparent Del Rio regards baseball as fun and football as an obsession.

"The Olympics are not a top priority right now," Del Rio admits. "I'm leaning toward football (as a pro), and it's important that I have a great senior year. I'm looking forward to a lot of weight training this summer and I'm not sure how much I could contribute to the Olympic team. *Nothing* is going to keep me away from the weights, even if I'm selected to the Olympic team. I'm really serious about being in the best shape possible for football.

"I'VE HAD A SICKNESS inside me ever since the end of football season. I can't wait for the first day of practice. I haven't played spring ball because of baseball, but a day hasn't gone by when I haven't thought about playing football. The day after football season ended, I went out for baseball and started getting ready. I had to sweat. I had to do something."

Despite Del Rio's singlemindedness, Dedeaux regards his catcher a top-flight prospect. He will carry two catchers and a third player who can catch on the 20-man Olympic roster. "Jack could be a great prospect if he concentrated on baseball," Dedeaux says. "As it is, he's still a fine prospect. Only a kid in the Carolinas stands out above the rest among college catchers."

Dedeaux regards Del Rio a better prospect than Arizona State's Dan Wakamatsu, who is having a poor year at the plate. Curiously, Wakamatsu was a boyhood neighbor of Del Rio, catching at Hayward High while Jack played first base and pitched. Another former Hayward prep, pitcher Doug Henry, is the relief ace of the Sun Devils and has a chance to make the Olympic squad.

"I love playing baseball," Del Rio says, "and I'm definitely not giving up on the sport. I just approach it differently than football. I enjoy baseball and I've proven to myself that I can play at this level, even though I only give it about half a year. I could be real good in baseball if I concentrated on it, but that's just not going to happen this summer.

"I want to get into that training program as soon as possible because I want to be stronger, faster and more flexible. A lot of us have something to prove after a losing season. A lot of us weren't used to losing. The only thing I learned from it was how much I hate to lose. I'm not one for making excuses. I just want to get on with the season."

DEL RIO, WHO WILL become a rare four-year starter at USC this fall, ranks among the surest tacklers in the nation. In his first three seasons, he's registered 44 tackles for losses, resulting in 291 negative yards. Last year, he totaled 13 sacks in 11 games, including four of the Trojans' nine sacks of Cal quarterback Gale Gilbert. He loves hitting people more than baseballs.

"Baseball is more of a mental game, so it can be more frustrating in many ways," Del Rio points out. "It's practically *all* mental. Football is much more physically demanding. In football, I can release anxiety by hitting a guy extra hard. In baseball, you don't have that release, so that can be very frustrating.

"Nothing in baseball quite compares to the feeling I get when I hit someone hard. I *love* sacking the quarterback. You play baseball just about every day, so it's more of a fun thing for me. In football, you bust your tail a whole week for just one game — and it becomes worth all that work when you can make that one big play."

Yet baseball has been much more than something to do between football seasons for Del Rio. He was drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays out of high school, but turned them down for college. When he finally decided on USC (Cal and Stanford also were in the running), it was understood he would be playing football *and* baseball for the Trojans.

"I was drafted in the 22nd round after I told the Blue Jays not to waste a high pick on me because I intended to go to college," Del Rio recalls. "Dad (Jack Sr.) and I narrowed the list to six schools (including Nebraska, Notre Dame and UCLA). I picked USC not only because I could compete against the best players in the nation, but because it had a good baseball program and a good business school."

Del Rio excelled in football from the start, but didn't emerge as a college baseball standout until his sophomore year, batting .319 as the Trojans' regular catcher. He's improved at the plate as a junior, but his catching skills could use some refinement. But first things first. There's an All-America football season beckoning, a time when the aggressive athlete is in his element. If the Trojans don't turn it around in the fall

Del Rio says Mosebar

By Pat Frizzell
Tribune Staff Writer

APR 30 1983

JACK DEL RIO was as surprised as the Raiders were to learn that his USC teammate, Don Mosebar, the Raiders' first draft choice, had undergone back surgery.

"I've played against Mosebar in practice for two years," linebacker-catcher Del Rio said when he arrived with the Trojans' baseball team Friday for a series with California. "He's the guy who has made me come along in football.

"After you face a guy like Mosebar day after day, a game can be almost like a breather.

"But Mosebar's back injury (suffered while shotputting) had been kept secret. The first I learned about it was from the media."

Del Rio, one of the Bay Area's most-sought athletes when he was graduated from Hayward High School in 1981, prophesied that Mosebar will recover completely and help the Raiders.

"But I doubt that he'd have been drafted in the top three rounds," Del Rio said, "if the Raiders had known about the surgery. How could they have taken a chance?"

Not that Del Rio has any doubts about Mosebar's future. He pointed out that Mosebar underwent knee surgery earlier in his career and bounced back.

"He's mentally tough and smart," Del Rio said. "He'll do what the doctor tells him to do. He may not be of much use to the Raiders for the first six months or a year. But it's tough for a rookie lineman to break in immediately in pro football, anyway."

Del Rio also has extremely high regard for linebacker Riki Gray, another USC teammate, drafted in the fifth round by the San Francisco 49ers. He believes Gray and Mosebar have much in common.

"Riki is really intense," Del Rio said. "His attitude helped our defense. It should help the 49ers. He has so much heart."

"Riki had come back last season from surgery himself — knee surgery. He redshirted a year. I myself said he couldn't come back. But now the knee Riki had operated on is stronger than his other one."

"I think Mosebar, with his size, strength and determination, is a lot like Gray. He's solid."

See DEL RIO, Page D-4

Del Rio said he believes UCLA linebacker Blanchard Montgomery, drafted in the third round, also will help the 49ers. He noted that he can't speak about Montgomery from close personal experience, as he can about Mosebar and Gray.

Del Rio is optimistic about next football season, when the Trojans will be coached by Ted Tollner, their offensive coordinator under John Robinson last year.

"We're tired of three-loss seasons," Del Rio said. "Coach

Tollner is new, exciting, refreshing. It's rubbing off on the players. I've seen three spring practices at SC, counting my visits from Hayward when I was being recruited, and this spring's is by far the most enthusiastic. I think we'll be tough."

Del Rio said he is pleased that Artie Gigantino, responsible for recruiting him to USC, is still the Trojans' defensive coordinator.

As for his own career, Del Rio envisions encountering a situation two years hence similar to that this month of Stanford's John Elway, with a choice between two sports.

"I'd like to be in a position similar to John's," said Del Rio, whose 20th birthday was April 4. "I like both baseball and football. There is no

chance I'll sign a baseball contract next year, after my junior season. I plan to graduate with a degree in public administration. I want to keep as many doors open as possible. After all, an injury might hinder my pro football or baseball chances."

Del Rio suggested that a catcher in baseball can be more valuable than an outfielder, such as Elway, while a linebacker in football may not be as valuable as a quarterback.

At 6-foot-4 and 230 pounds, Del Rio is ideally built for an NFL linebacker. But veteran Coach Rod Dedeaux has had him catching most of USC's baseball games. He is batting .295 with three home runs after a slow start at the plate.

"I'm swinging the bat better now," Del Rio said. "We're in second place, three games

back of Stanford. We have four games with Stanford on our field next week. We hope to make the NCAA playoffs. If we can win the Pac-10 Southern Division championship it will be that much extra."

Although a sophomore, Del Rio is in his first USC baseball season. A hamstring tear bothered him last year and he confined his energies to spring football.

Another Eastbay player with the Trojans, rained out Friday and now scheduled to play at Cal today, Sunday and Monday, is 6-foot-8 freshman pitcher Randy Johnson from Livermore. He has a 4-0 record.

"Randy always has been a fastball pitcher," Del Rio said. "But his control has improved and his breaking ball gets better every day."

USC's 'Mr. Mom' domesticates foes

THU OCT 25 1984

By The Tribune staff and news services

LOS ANGELES — After watching Jack Del Rio cook, clean and care for his younger brothers, one of his pals tagged him "Mr. Mom."

At 6-foot-4 and 235 pounds, the USC linebacker somehow doesn't fit the image.

USC defensive coordinator Artie Gigantino, who recruited Del Rio out of Hayward High School, once described Del Rio as having "a real

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

sense of nastiness about him" on the football field.

Gil Brandt, vice president of the Dallas Cowboys, has said of Del Rio, "Look for Jack to be one of the dominating forces in the NFL in the mid-1980s."

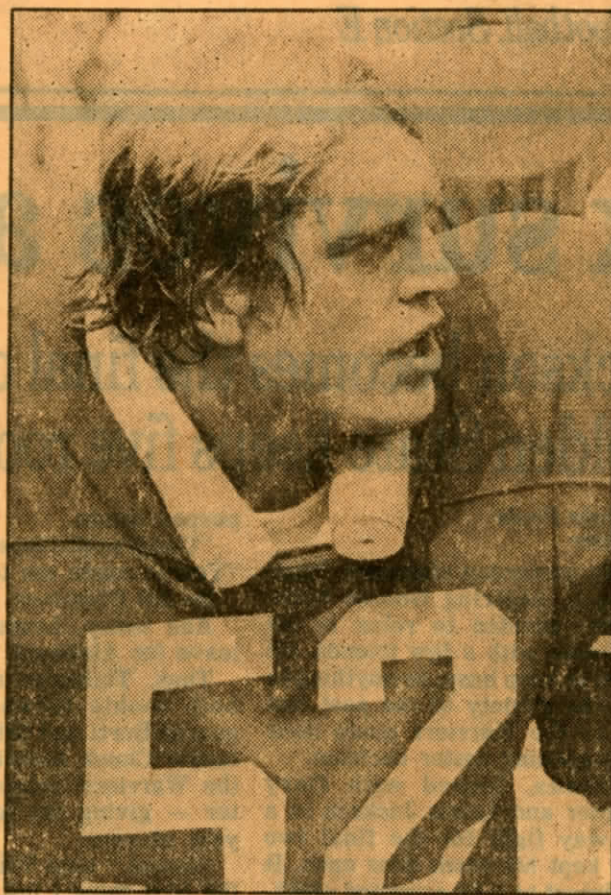
A four-year starter at USC, Del Rio laughed as he recalled his "domesticity." He and two brothers and a step-brother were raised by their divorced father, and Jack, as the eldest, helped around the house in Hayward.

"I spent some long days," Del Rio said. "My father used to work long hours, so I'd get up at 6 in the morning, make breakfast for me and my brothers and make sure they got to school on time."

"We'd all clean up the dishes and the house and sometimes, if my father was working late, we'd cook dinner. I make good lasagna and meat loaf."

Interestingly, he believes learning to take care of himself was a factor in his earning a first-string spot with the Trojans as a freshman.

"It helped when I came here. You suddenly find yourself really on your own for the first time and a lot of the guys seemed to have trouble making the adjustment," Del Rio said. "There



Jack Del Rio is four-year starter at USC.

were guys who didn't have any idea how to make a bed, and who couldn't even fry an egg.

"I had done all that before, so there wasn't

really a period of adjustment for me. I could take care of myself and concentrate on football."

Del Rio became a starter in the Trojans' fifth game of the 1981 season and went on to post 69 tackles — 11 for losses — that year. He has led the team in tackles for loss each of the past three seasons, and had 13 quarterback sacks for 107 yards in 1983.

Although hampered by a string of minor injuries this season, he's third on the team in tackles with 56, has deflected three passes and recovered one fumble as the Trojans' defense has keyed their 5-1 campaign.

Saturday at the Los Angeles Coliseum, Del Rio goes against California, which wanted him to stay home and play football in Berkeley, and that has spelled trouble for the Bears in the past. Jack may be hunting down three Cal quarterbacks in his final appearance against Cal. Joe Kapp, coach of the Bears, isn't sure who will play the position.

Veteran starter Gale Gilbert is nursing several injuries, including a severe ankle sprain and bruised ribs, and may not play. Understudy Kevin Brown and redshirt freshman Brian Bedford figure to get some action. Only Bedford has the quickness to elude Del Rio's style of blitzing.

In addition to being a talented football player, Del Rio has been the starting catcher on the Trojans' baseball team the past two years, hitting .342 with seven homers and 36 runs batted in last season.

He said that he's made the decision to pursue a pro football career instead of trying to make it in baseball, citing the probable stint in the minor leagues and the uncertainties that baseball players usually have to endure.

"With football, it's an immediate opportunity," he said. "Here it is, either you make it or you don't."

DAVE NEWHOUSE



STANFORD — Four years ago, Jack Del Rio went to USC to play in the Rose Bowl. Or Rose Bowls. Considering USC's past affinity for Pasadena, Del Rio figured he might receive one Rose Bowl for each year in school, like a yearbook.

His freshman year, the Trojans got as far as the Fiesta Bowl. His sophomore and junior years, the NCAA slapped USC's hand for ticket scalping, thereby making it ineligible for any bowl.

As Donna Sumner coos, this is the last dance. Del Rio's Rose Bowl dream comes down to next Saturday's game with top-ranked Washington in Los Angeles. If the Trojans win, they're in. It doesn't matter what they do after that.

"It will be different this time," Del Rio predicted. "Washington's offense is not the strongest group. Stanford has as good an offense as Washington. Our offense is stronger than Washington's — better running game, stronger linemen and Timmy Green is better than any quarterback who's playing for them.

"Washington's good at taking the ball away from you. And their special teams are very good. Special teams will be a big part of this game.

"We're on our way to the Rose Bowl," Del Rio said confidently.

Whether Del Rio gets to Pasadena or not, he's fulfilled his end of the bargain even if USC does not.

"It's worked out beautifully," the ex-Hayward High School star said of his USC experience. "I'm very pleased with how things turned out, even with the probation.

"After that happened, people asked me, 'Where you going now?' I told them, 'I'm a Trojan. I'm sticking with it.' Do you know that not one person left our team?

"People didn't think much of our chances this year, probably because of our bad season last year (4-6-1).

"What's different about this year's team is the attitude. We came into camp believing in a goal. Last year, we looked for excuses. This year, we're making things happen."

But Del Rio's four years at USC hinge on the Washington game, for his last shot at Pasadena could blossom or wilt like the rose next weekend (If the two teams tie, the race continues).

"That's a big part of it," he said. "But it's more like the icing on the cake than the cake itself."

DEL RIO is the cover subject of this year's USC football media guide. Under his name is written:

"Lombardi Award and All-American candidate."

Whether either prophecy is fulfilled, it makes little difference: Jack Del Rio is one tremendous football talent.

Dallas Cowboys scouting director Gil Brandt foresees Del Rio becoming "one of the dominating forces in the NFL in the mid-1980s."

That's heady stuff even for the 6-4, 235-pound Del Rio, who is building up platitudes as quickly as quarterback sacks.

"They say I'm 28 tackles behind the team leader," said Del Rio, who is actually 37 tackles behind USC leader Duane Bickett's total of 104. "That doesn't mean I'm not doing a good job. People run away from you . . . lots of things happen.

"Right now, I'm not being blocked. And this was the first game this year where I really felt healthy."

Stanford tackle Jeff Deaton often had to block Del Rio when the Trojan linebacker lined up in a lineman's stance on passing downs. Del Rio got two sacks — one nullified by a penalty, and recovered a fumble.

"He's the best linebacker I've played against," Deaton said, "but you saw him, he's bigger than 235."

Del Rio said he weighs 235 before each game and 230 afterward. He just plays a lot bigger. In fact, he seems to tilt the field at times.

He liked Stanford's new run-oriented offense (33 rushes, 29 pass attempts yesterday).

"It's a good philosophy," he said. "They've relied too much on the pass in the past. Now they're not gambling so much with the big play, which causes the big turnover. They have a sounder offense.

"Stanford looks on the way up. They don't give up.

"I'm from the Bay Area. I'd love to see Cal and Stanford do well."

BOTH SCHOOLS would have done a lot better four years ago had Del Rio enrolled on their campuses instead of Tommy Trojan's.

USC's gain, their loss. Not only is he a tremendous force in football, but he hit .342 last year with seven home runs and 36 runs batted in as the starting catcher on the Trojan baseball team. However, his professional future lies in football.

Four years in Los Angeles seems to have taken Hayward out of the boy as well as the boy out of Hayward.

"L.A.'s a big, fast moving place," he said. "It's tough to come back home where it's a little slower.

"My first year in L.A., I thought the people down there were a little rude. They're moving so fast, they're not nice to people. But I understand it a little better now, and I've learned to adjust."

Del Rio is moving at a little faster pace himself.

Could he see himself driving down the Ventura Freeway in shades and a hot sports car?

"Sure, if I had the opportunity," he said. "A Porsche Targa would be nice."

Tribune columnist Dave Newhouse appears five days a week in the sports section and hosts KNBR Sportsphone 68 Monday through Friday, 7-10 p.m.

THU NOV 22 1984

The Associated Press

NEW HAVEN, Conn. Southern California's Jack Del Rio, who stopped opposing rushers behind the line of scrimmage 55 times this year, was among the 1984 selections announced today for college football's oldest all-star team, the Walter Camp Football Foundation All-America team.

Del Rio, a graduate of Hayward High, was joined at linebacker on the team by Iowa's Larry Station and Auburn's Greg Carr.

Doug Flutie of Boston College, college football's all-time total yardage leader, was named at the quarterback position.

Flutie — who set an NCAA total yardage record with more than 10,000 yards during his college career — was joined on the team by Keith Byars of Ohio State, the nation's leading rusher this season with 1,655 yards.

Selected to the 1984 Walter Camp backfield along with Byars were Florida State's Greg Allen and Ken Davis of Texas Christian. Allen was a Camp all-star selection in 1983.

Clemson's 330-pound defensive lineman William Perry and Pittsburgh's 285-pound offensive

lineman Bill Fralic were the other returnees to the 1984 team, which will be honored Feb. 2.

New Orleans Del Rio

WED MAY 1 1984

By The Tribune staff and news

Jack Del Rio of Hayward, a two-time All-Coast linebacker and four-season starter at Southern California, was drafted in the third round yesterday by the New Orleans Saints.

Del Rio said he believed he deserved to be drafted by the Saints.

"I feel I'm a first-round draft pick," Del Rio said after learning he was New Orleans-bound.

"I'm glad I'll have an opportunity to show people in New Orleans that they've got themselves a good linebacker."

Another USC linebacker, Duane Bickett, was drafted by the Indianapolis Colts in the first round. Bickett was the first player selected in the

New Orleans drafts Del Rio in 3rd round

WED MAY 1 1985

By The Tribune staff and news services

Jack Del Rio of Hayward, a two-time All-Coast linebacker and four-season starter at Southern California, was drafted in the third round yesterday by the New Orleans Saints.

Del Rio said he believed he deserved to be drafted higher.

"I feel I'm a first-round, quality linebacker," Del Rio said after learning he was New Orleans-bound.

"I'm glad I'll have an opportunity to show people in New Orleans that they've got themselves a good linebacker."

Another USC linebacker, Duane Bickett, was drafted by the Indianapolis Colts in the first round. Bickett was the fifth player selected in the entire draft.

Del Rio was the 68th overall pick. New Orleans drafted another linebacker, Alvin Toles from Tennessee, in the first round.

Del Rio, who made at least one All-America team (the Walter Camp Foundation team) last fall, originally was projected as

a top draft choice. He did not impress pro scouts as much last fall, however, as in his earlier USC seasons.

Reportedly Del Rio failed to impress at the annual January tryout camp of college seniors held for scouts from a number of NFL teams. This was conducted in New Orleans.

"They caught me at a bad time," Del Rio said. "They caught me when I was out of shape."

"I had just got through making four or five long trips for banquets. I traveled all over. I certainly was not in good shape."

Del Rio said he thought about not going to the tryout but explained:

"I didn't want them to think I had an attitude problem."

"I talked to my coach and he said to just go and do my best. I ran a 5.1 (40-yard dash) there, which is absolutely ridiculous."

Del Rio, an all-around athlete at Hayward High School before attending USC, stands 6-4 and weighs 240 pounds.

Toles, chosen two rounds higher by the Saints, is 6-1 and 215.

New Orleans coach Bum Phillips said he isn't concerned that some people considered Del Rio to be a step slow.

Both linebackers, Phillips said, have an attribute that overshadows any shortcoming. He described that to The Associated Press as "nastiness."

Phillips said he believes Del Rio lasted until the third round because of his relatively slow time in the 40-yard dash.

"I think sometimes too much is made over a step," Phillips said. "You are not going to run down a burner with 4.9, but you are not going to run one down with 4.8 or 4.6 either."

"Everybody goes into the draft looking for 4-nothing. I am looking for football players."

In between the two linebackers, the Saints went for huge offensive lineman Daren Gilbert of Cal State Fullerton, 6-6 and 285.

Del Rio was a varsity baseball catcher, as well as a football player, for two seasons at USC.

es dropped

The day after that, Del Rio to police to file his own complaint against Taylor. Del Rio claimed Taylor beat him first and then beat him to the ground. A case disposition form out by the city prosecutor's office, police were notified. Charges were declined because there was "insufficient evidence of criminal intent."

THU AUG 1 1985

Del Rio agrees to terms with Saints

The Associated Press

RUSTON, La. — The New Orleans Saints announced yesterday that second-round draft pick Jack Del Rio, a linebacker from Hayward High and Southern Cal, had agreed to terms and would join the team for the weekend scrimmage in Denver.

No details of the agreement were made public.

Del Rio's agreement leaves only one draft choice unsigned — Daren Gilbert, an offensive tackle from Fullerton State.

Del Rio-Taylor charges dropped

The Associated Press
FBI OCT 1 6 1987

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — No charges will be filed in the Sept. 24 scuffle between former Kansas City Chiefs star Otis Taylor and striking Chiefs linebacker Jack Del Rio, police said yesterday.

Both men filed criminal complaints in the incident, which occurred during the first day of picketing outside Arrowhead Stadium.

Taylor, 45, filed an assault report against Del Rio with police Sept. 29, claiming the 24-year-old striking player used abusive language toward him, grabbed him around the neck and pulled him to the ground.

Taylor filed a civil suit against Del Rio and the NFL Players Association the next day, seeking \$1 million in dam-

ages. The day after that, Del Rio went to police to file his own assault complaint against Taylor. Del Rio claimed Taylor grabbed him first and then knocked him to the ground.

In a case disposition form filled out by the city prosecutor's office, police were notified charges were declined because there was "insufficient evidence of criminal intent."

SUN OCT 4 1987

Del Rio files complaint against Taylor

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Jack Del Rio, a starting Kansas City Chiefs player who was involved in a scuffle with Chiefs scout Otis Taylor, filed an assault complaint against Taylor the day after Taylor filed a \$1 million lawsuit against Del Rio and the NFL Players Association.

Del Rio, the 24-year-old linebacker from Howard High who was acquired from New Orleans in August, told police Taylor knocked him down and "landed on top" of him during a scuffle Sept. 2. Taylor, a former All-Pro receiver and member of the Chiefs' Hall of Fame, filed an assault complaint against Del Rio on Tuesday claiming that Del Rio started the fight by grabbing him around the neck.

FBI SEP - 1 1989

Cowboys claim former Hayward star Del Rio

IRVING, Texas — The Dallas Cowboys claimed fifth-year linebacker Jack Del Rio on waivers from the Kansas City Chiefs.

Del Rio, a former three-sport star at Hayward High, was released Tuesday by the Chiefs, and the Cowboys claimed the former USC All-American off the waiver wire Wednesday. Because he is a vested veteran, Del Rio had 24 hours to report to the Cowboys or become a free agent and eligible to negotiate with any team.

Del Rio, 6-foot-4, 238 pounds, practiced with the Cowboys yesterday.

A third-round draft choice of the New Orleans Saints in 1985, Del Rio was named to the all-rookie team that season. He played two seasons with the Saints but was traded to the Chiefs in 1987 for a fifth-round draft choice.

Del Rio started 10 games for Kansas City last season.

Del Rio — one tough Cowboy

The Associated Press

IRVING, Texas — Jack Del Rio is one of only five good men to play middle linebacker on a permanent basis for the Dallas Cowboys.

Before Del Rio, there was Jerry Tubbs, Lee Roy Jordan, Bob Breunig and Eugene Lockhart.

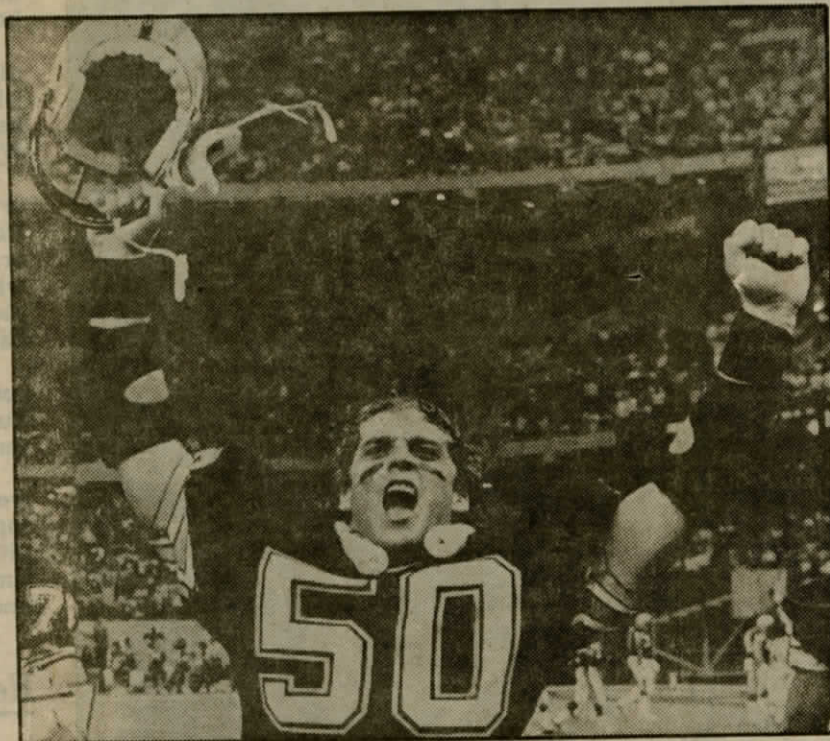
Del Rio, a Californian who played his high school football at Hayward High and his college ball at USC, is not particularly fast but he is quick of mind and a strong tackler. He took over this season when Lockhart was traded to the New England Patriots.

Through 14 games, Del Rio leads the team with 115 tackles, 67 of them solo.

What has made Del Rio's season amazing is he hasn't played middle linebacker since his high school days. At Hayward, he was a fullback and linebacker who led the Farmers to a championship.

"He's been our defensive quarterback," said Dallas coach Jimmy Johnson. "He's helped make us more physical against the run."

The Cowboys tried Ken Norton at middle linebacker during training camp, and Del Rio felt if he couldn't chase Norton back to the outside it would be pink slip time once the regular season



The Associated Press

Jack Del Rio, shown here when he was with New Orleans, now leads the Dallas Cowboys with 115 tackles, 67 of them solo.

began.

"I'm not in Dallas if I'm not the starting middle linebacker," Del Rio said in training camp.

He was the starter in the middle and hasn't looked back since.

"I had confidence I could fill Eugene's spot," Del Rio said. "I

knew what I was capable of doing even if others didn't."

Before the season, one of Johnson's primary goals was to stop the run.

"You're dead in the NFC East if you can't," he said.

The Cowboys have climbed

into the NFL's top 10 in stopping the run and Del Rio has been a big factor.

"Jack is just tenacious," said defensive lineman Russell Maryland. "He's our leader out there in the middle. He might not be quick or run fast but his desire makes him good at that position. We don't have a lot of big-name talent on our defense like Philadelphia, but we've got guys with a lot of heart like Del Rio."

Defensive coordinator Dave Wannstedt said "Jack understands defenses. He's smart. This move will really help his career."

The 6-foot-4, 240-pound Del Rio was a third-round pick by the New Orleans Saints in 1985. Johnson claimed him off the waiver wire in the summer of 1989.

Del Rio hopes Vikings help renew his career

SUN AUG - 2 1992

By Mike Nadel
The Associated Press

MANKATO, Minn. — Leaving Dallas — where he had finally established himself as an National Football League player, where his wife had started a business, where his daughter was in school, where he had just bought a home — was actually kind of enjoyable for Jack Del Rio. He got to stick it to the "arrogant" Cowboys of Jerry Jones and Jimmy Johnson.

After leading Dallas with 130 tackles last season, Del Rio wasn't protected from Plan B free agency.

The Minnesota Vikings signed the middle linebacker and made him a key part of first-year coach Dennis Green's retooled defense.

"Dallas offered me an opportunity to jumpstart my career. I had bounced around, landed in Dallas, rededicated myself and had some good years down there," said Del Rio, a former USC All-America linebacker who preped at Hayward High School in California. "But I think they expected me to be in a comfort zone, where I wouldn't pick up and move again."

"It looks like I'm a guy, 29 years old, that maybe would like to finish my career as only the fifth linebacker ever to play the middle for Dallas."

"All that was nice, but Jerry Jones and Jimmy Johnson are so caught up in the Cowboy mystique that they believe players wouldn't leave."

They got caught up in that and didn't make the right business decision.

"It made it kind of fun, really, just to give a blow to that arrogant side of things. Hopefully, it came across as a shock."

The Vikings were shocked Del Rio was available and quickly signed him to a two-year contract.

"We traded Jimmy Williams, an outside linebacker, we told Mike Merriweather that he was going back to the strong side and Ray Berry that he was going back to the weak side (from the middle). And then we didn't have a middle linebacker," Green said. "We looked at Plan B and we were fortunate enough to come up with the man we were looking for."

Although Del Rio didn't like the Cowboys' arrogance and although he resented them for forcing him to accept a contract that would have paid him only 50 percent had he been injured, leaving was still a difficult decision.

After all, he had resurrected a career that had sputtered through four unproductive seasons in New Orleans and Kansas City, and he had helped Dallas go from a 1-15 laughingstock in 1989 to an 11-5 playoff team in 1991.

"It took the right match and Minnesota was the right match," he said. "I don't want to talk about the negatives (of Dallas). I'm happy with my situation here. I came here for the positive reasons rather than leaving for negative reasons."

Del Rio's spectacular TD sparks Vikings' rout

TUE NOV - 3 1992

By Dave Goldberg
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — They called the old Minnesota Vikings the "Purple People Eaters."

Jim Harbaugh and the Chicago Bears must think of the new Vikings as the "Purple Pass Eaters."

The Vikings beat Harbaugh and the Bears 38-10 last night to take command of the NFC Central race.

Journeyman linebacker Jack Del Rio turned

the game with an 84-yard interception return for a touchdown and picked off another Harbaugh pass to end a Chicago threat and set up a Minnesota field goal.

Another linebacker, Carlos Jenkins, added the final insult by returning an interception off Peter Tom Willis 19 yards for a touchdown.

"Jack Del Rio is the greatest player I've seen in the nickel in a long time," said coach Dennis Green of Minnesota, which signed Del Rio, a former Hayward High star, after he was left unprotected

under the Plan B free agency system by Dallas last year despite leading the team in tackles.

"He can make a lot of things happen," Green said. "He's the kind of guy who makes this team click."

It was the second time this season that the Bears were done in by Minnesota interceptions. The Vikings won the first meeting 21-20 when Todd Scott's fourth-quarter return for a TD began a run

See VIKINGS Page C-10

man as tight now, Ditka said. "Maybe we aren't as good as we think we are or as we should be. We've got eight games left and we've got to start digging out of the ditch."

It will be hard.

The combination of the two wins over Chicago left Minnesota at 6-2 and effectively three games ahead of the Bears (4-4) in the division. That's because if the teams finish in a tie, the Vikings get the first tiebreaker by virtue of the two victories.

The worst home loss in Ditka's 11 seasons as coach of the Bears was a career game for Del Rio, who came in with just three interceptions in 7½ NFL seasons with New Orleans, Kansas City, Dallas and the Vikings. Last week, he just missed a game-saving interception two plays before Washington's Chip Lohmiller kicked the deciding field goal at Minneapolis.

And it overshadowed three sacks of Harbaugh by John Ran-

The Vikings led 14-3 at half-time on 1-yard touchdown runs by Roger Craig and Terry Allen, the second following another Chicago turnover, Darren Lewis' fumble at his 32.

On the first play of the second half, Allen fumbled and Shaun Gayle recovered at the Minnesota 21. On the next play, Harbaugh aimed for Tom Waddle over the middle.

Waddle was slowed when he ran into umpire Neil Gereb and Del Rio dove and grabbed the pass just before it hit the ground. Then he got up and rumbled down the left sideline, breaking tackles before cutting back for the end zone.

So just 20 seconds after Chicago seemed ready to close the deficit to 14-10 and 36 seconds into the second half, it was 21-3 and the rout was on.

"We're better than we played," Ditka said.

151
Vikings' money
SUN MAR - 8 1992
convinces Del Rio

The Associated Press

E.B.

IRVING, Texas — Darrick Brownlow remains as the sole middle linebacker for the Dallas Cowboys following the departure of Jack Del Rio, who has signed a pact with the Minnesota Vikings.

The Cowboys have left Brownlow unprotected, gambling that the second-year player will stay put.

Del Rio, the Cowboys' leading tackler last season, signed as a Plan B free agent with the Vikings. Former Cincinnati defensive end Skip McClendon also signed with Minnesota.

"Any time you lose a good player, it's going to have an effect," Cowboys coach Jimmy Johnson told The Dallas Morning News. "Although I'm disappointed, that's part of Plan B. We knew the risk. I can understand him leaving."

Del Rio, 28, accepted a two-year deal from the Vikings worth \$1.25 million. He received a \$150,000 signing bonus and salaries of \$500,000 in 1992 and \$600,000 in 1993.

The Cowboys' offer would have paid Del Rio a \$75,000 bonus April 2 if he had stayed with the club. He had two years left on his contract with the Cowboys that would have paid him \$850,000 in base salary.

"Money ended up entering into it, but by no means was it the only reason," Del Rio said.

"They have a new coaching staff that I believe can get the job done and the players in place to make a run. They also have a history and tradition of playing great defense up there," he said.

Last season, when the Cowboys earned a spot in the NFL playoffs with an 11-5 record, Del Rio had 77 solo tackles, 53 assists and 130 total tackles in the regular season, leading the team in all three categories.

FOOTBALL

WED MAR - 4 1992

Del Rio signs with Vikings

Middle linebacker Jack Del Rio, a former Hayward High and USC star who was the Dallas Cowboys' leading tackler last season, and former Cincinnati defensive end Skip McClendon, signed as Plan B free agents with the Minnesota Vikings yesterday. ... Pittsburgh

WED AUG 30 1989

NOTES — Linebacker Jack Del Rio a former star at Hayward High and USC, was one of 10 players cut by the Kansas City Chiefs. Del Rio had played two years with the Chiefs and two before that with New Orleans. . . . The Chiefs also signed

Vikings' Del Rio wins NFL award

The Associated Press

THU NOV - 5 1992

NEW YORK — Minnesota's Jack Del Rio was named NFC defensive player of the week yesterday.

Erik Williams of the Dallas Cowboys earned a rare honor for an offensive lineman when he was named the NFC's offensive player of the week.

Ken O'Brien of the New York Jets was named AFC offensive player and Cincinnati's Alfred Williams earned defensive honors.

Del Rio earned his award with two interceptions Monday night against Chicago, one of which he returned 84 yards for a touchdown. He also forced a fumble.



C A R L
STEWARD

SUN DEC 13 1992

Del Rio no longer unhappy wanderer

Minneapolis

JACK DEL RIO has taken part in enough NFL rebuilding projects to qualify for an appointment as Housing and Urban Development secretary.

But don't get any notions, Mr. President-elect. Del Rio has no interest in Washington other than possibly kicking some Redskins butt in the playoffs.

The man has moved around enough. In fact, the Hayward High all-sports legend has developed a rather legendary rep as the Lowell Thomas of NFL linebackers. Del Rio has moved in and out of so many "permanent" new homes in the past 7½ years that he's through taking chances — he and his wife, Linda, recently bought a house in Alamo, and they will just rent in whichever city Jack is playing during the football season.

Today, Del Rio is in Minnesota with the Vikings to play the San Francisco 49ers. Tomorrow, well, he's crossing his fingers that folks won't be calling him Journeyman Jack or the Hayward Wayward much longer.

Del Rio thinks he's finally found an NFL home with the Vikings under Denny Green. He'd be sure of it if not for what happened to him last season, when he thought he'd found a lasting address near the other Alamo — the one in Texas.

DEL RIO HAD his best year as a pro with the Dallas Cowboys in 1991. He started all 16 games at middle linebacker in his third season with the Cowboys and led the defense in tackles. He felt so secure in his position he bought a huge house and got involved with local charities. Linda started a business . . . and then Dallas left him unprotected as a Plan B free agent.

"I was attempting to set some roots," Del Rio says. "I guess they thought I was too comfortable to pick up and leave."

But Dallas' Plan B strategy had a reverse effect. After the year he'd had, Del Rio was insulted. His agent, Tom Condon, hooked him up with Green, and once Jack visited Minneapolis, he deemed it the perfect fit for himself, even though it meant yet another renovation situation.

Del Rio not only has bounced around the league in his eight-year NFL career but also has had an uncanny history of ground-floor assignments in new coaches' rebuilding plans. His second year with the New Orleans Saints was Jim Mora's first. His two years in Kansas City were Frank Gansz's only two. He arrived in Dallas with Jimmy Johnson in 1989; and this season, he is an integral part of Green's resuscitation of the Vikings.

HOW INTEGRAL? Del Rio again is leading his team in tackles, and he has even more through 13 games than he did last season. He has a career-high three sacks and two interceptions, including one he returned for 84 yards and a touchdown during a Monday night game against Chicago.

"I think Jack should be considered one of the top two or three middle linebackers in the NFL," says Green boldly. "His tackles show it. His leadership shows it. I think when we got him from Dallas, we got a guy who was just getting ready to put together four or five real good years. We were fortunate."

Del Rio agrees, to the point that he told Green during the offseason that he believed that his career was about to take off in a big way.

"First of all, I'm in a 4-3 scheme now and calling the defensive signals," he explains. "I can use my intelligence to get to the football and I have more leverage. I didn't start hitting the weights until I was released from Kansas City, but I've lifted ever since, so I've added strength and speed."

More than anything, though, the 29-year-old Del Rio has found inner peace. He was so frustrated after his experiences in New Orleans and Kansas City that playing football became more of a horror to him than a joy.

"After K.C., honestly, I almost retired," he admits. "My play reflected that. Everything was going sour — there was the strike, the altercation with Otis Taylor . . . plus I played every

Linebacks find home

Continued from D-1

linebacker position for five different defensive coordinators my first five years. I just kind of burned out on it."

When the Chiefs released him, he thought that was it. But then Johnson, desperate for defensive help in the wretched Dallas situation he inherited, pulled Del Rio out of purgatory and proceeded to rescue his career. Johnson hardly coddled him, though.

"Jimmy brought a lot of players in to challenge me," Del Rio says. "It forced me to push myself. I developed good work habits, and things just sort of took off from there. The one thing Jimmy always talked about was that you had to be able control yourself before you can control what goes on around you. It really hit home with

Del Rio hesitates to draw comparisons between Johnson and Green, or Mora or Gansz, for that matter. He's not terribly proud of his vagabond rep. He just says that he believes Green's approach has been the correct one for a team notorious for its underachieving. Jack understood what it took, too, because he'd been through it on a personal level.

"The best way to describe Denny is that he's a true professional," Del Rio said. "He treats us all like men, and we all started from Day One on the same page. He only cares about production on the field. He's not interested in how many houses you can bench-press."

With any luck, Del Rio may not have to be lifting his furniture for a while, either.

Del Rio becomes a happy camper with the Vikings

SUN JAN - 9 1994

By Bill Soliday
STAFF WRITER

Minnesota Vikings linebacker Jack Del Rio knows what it's like to be an afterthought.

Therefore, his team's circumstance in the playoff game today at the Meadowlands against the New York Giants is little more than business as usual.

The Hayward High alumnus finds his team a 6½-point underdog and the darkest of NFL playoff dark horses.

But it's far from business as usual for Del Rio. With a victory today will come a trip back home to face San Francisco, one victory away from a trip "back home" to Dallas.

He owes the Cowboys one for that afterthought business.

Two years ago, Del Rio was a Cowboy. He had just purchased a home in Dallas, and his wife had established a real estate relocation business.

But things were not perfect in Dallas. In 1990, he injured a knee in training camp. He didn't complain. He figured hard work would reap rewards. So he played through every game and finished with 104 tackles as the Cowboys improved from 1-15 to 7-9.

"The knee required surgery and would get all puffy every week, and I'd be limping around until Sunday," Del Rio said. "I fought through it and took one for the team and turned around and what was my reward?"

"Jerry Jones gave me a contract that would pay me half the money if I got hurt. That was my reward."

Del Rio played out the season and led the Cowboys with 130 tackles in 1991. He got all his money, but teammate Bill Bates, who signed a similar deal, was a victim of the injury clause.

Dallas did not protect Del Rio during Plan B. Figuring by now he was not in their plans, Del Rio scampered to the waiting arms of Denny Green in Minnesota, where he has been a mainstay at middle linebacker for the past two years.

Today, Del Rio insists he does



Jack Del Rio
...Hayward High grad

not harbor a grudge toward the Cowboys themselves but questions Jones' strategy with handling player contracts — a festering situation in Dallas that has cropped up several times this year and could be a chink in the Cowboys' armor.

"Jerry Jones is the only one who gets away with it," he said. "It's unethical, but what's a player to do? Take the guy to court? He'd cut you, and you'd be out of a job. That's kind of his attitude. Take it or we'll find somebody else."

Del Rio is a happy camper in Minneapolis. He led the team in tackles with 169 this year. He has four interceptions, not bad for a player who used to be knocked for his pass coverage ability.

"I like to joke with the guys and say I've always been a good athlete," Del Rio said this week. "I played all three sports growing up (football, basketball and baseball at Hayward High), but I think the key is that each year I've been in the league I've got more used to pass coverage and got a little better at it."

"I think it's great that we're underdogs," he said. "All year long when we've been underdogs, we've responded well and played well. The trouble we've had is when we've been favored. And I don't see us being favored any



Vikings (9-7) vs. Giants (11-5)

When: Today, 9:30 a.m. (PST).

Where: The Meadowlands, East Rutherford, N.J.

TV/Radio: KPIX-TV, Channel 5. Announcers Pat Summerall and John Madden. KCBS, 740-AM. Announcers Jack Buck and Hank Stram.

Favorite: Giants by 6½.

Series record: Vikings lead 6-4. Giants have won the last three, including a 23-15 victory in 1990 in last meeting to clinch NFC East title.

Key injuries: (Vikings) NT Henry Thomas (ankle) is questionable. TE Mike Tice (neck) is probable.

(Giants) DE Michael Strahan (ankle) is out. T Jumbo Elliott (back) is out. CB Mark Collins (knee) is questionable. RB Dave Meggett (ankle) is questionable. LB Michael Brooks (foot) is questionable. LB Jessie Armstead (leg) is questionable. T Eric Moore (ankle) is probable.

Vikings on offense: Total offense 301.4 yards (17th), rushing 101.4 (21st), passing 199.9 (14th).

Giants on offense: Total offense 321.6 yards (10th), rushing 138.1 (1st), passing 183.4 (22nd).

Vikings on defense: Total defense 275.3 yards (1st), rushing 95.9 (6th), passing 179.4 (6th).

Giants on defense: Total defense 291.4 yards (5th), rushing 96.7 (7th), passing 194.8 (15th).

Vikings' key: With one exception, these are teams are virtual look-alikes with their aging ex-Super Bowl winning quarterbacks, their smothering defenses and their hard-line, no-nonsense coaches. The Vikings gave up fewer yards than anyone in the NFL, the Giants allowed fewer points. Minnesota's key is to neutralize the one thing the Giants have that they don't — the super back (Rodney Hampton). No NFC team gave up fewer yards rushing than the Vikings this year (They held the 49ers to 50 yards in 26 tries earlier this year). In contrast to steady Giants defense, Minnesota has big-play potential — 52 interceptions for 713 yards and eight touchdowns the last two years. DE Chris Doleman and DT John Randle had 12½ sacks each. The offense must remain mistake-free. McMahon has not been sacked in 3½ games and has won eight of 11 starts. Late RB arrival, unheralded

Scottie Graham, gained 487 yards in just eight games.

Giants' key: QB Phil Simms has had a better year than McMahon statistically, largely because Hampton (1,077 yards in 12 games) gives him lots of options. The Giants will try to control the clock as they have all year (the NFL's best ball-control team with an average of 32:18 in possession time) and strike occasionally with Mark Jackson and Chris Calloway deep and the versatile Meggett on specialty plays. Defensively, the Giants haven't the names they had in their glory years, but free-agent LB Carlton Bailey (who couldn't start in Buffalo) recorded 136 tackles. DE Keith Hamilton led the team with 11½ sacks as team improved from 25 to 41. LB Lawrence Taylor had a quiet 8½.

Quick stat: These were the NFC's best two teams in turnover ratio — the Giants at plus 11 (28 takeaways, an NFL-low 17 giveaways), Minnesota at plus 10 (34 takeaways, 24 giveaways).

Matchups to watch: Vikings RE Doleman vs. ailing Giants LT Jumbo Elliott's replacement, Eric Moore. Giants C Bart Oates vs. Vikings' MLB Jack Del Rio (163 tackles). Vikings WR Cris Carter vs. the ailing Collins or his CB replacement Phillippi Sparks. Giants SS Myron Guyton vs. Vikings TE Steve Jordan. Giants LG William Roberts vs. Vikings DT John Randle.

Notes: The Vikings have not beaten the Giants on the road in 23 years. ... Giants' coach Dan Reeves has played or coached in eight Super Bowls and 43 playoff games. ... Vikings' coach Denny Green is the 10th coach in NFL history to make the playoffs in each of his first two seasons. ... Vikings' RB Roger Craig has made the postseason every year he's been in the league since 1983. ... The Giants are 9-2 when Hampton rushes for 100 yards. ... 40 of PK Brad Daluiso's 64 kickoffs went for touchdowns. ... Vikings have more players with playoff experience, 37-18. ... Against common opponents, Giants are 5-2, Vikings 4-3. ... The Giants are 6-1 in their last seven playoff games. ... Anthony Carter holds playoff record for reception yardage (227 vs. San Francisco on Jan. 9, 1988).

— Bill Soliday

time in he near future. So it looks good for our team."

The Vikings are 6-2 this year as underdogs, 3-5 as favorites. The losses they suffered as underdogs were to — not surprisingly — Dallas (37-20) and San Francisco (38-19). The losses as favorites include games against Tampa Bay, San Diego, New Orleans and playoff teams Detroit and the Raiders.

Does anybody have a chance against his old teammates from

Dallas?

"I think several teams have a chance to knock them off," he said. "But it's not going to be easy. I think right now they're the most talented team in the league."

"Last year, I don't think they were the best team, but they played the best and won the Super Bowl. Now they have to go out and play the best again. That's why we play these games."

WED AUG 17 1994
Steussie, Del Rio in fights

In an unusually high-intensity morning practice by the Minnesota Vikings, former Cal offensive lineman Todd Steussie and Roosevelt Nix were involved in a fight. A few minutes later former Hayward High star Jack Del Rio and Jeff Christy got into a shoving match.

Del Rio earns honors

THU DEC 15 1994

NEW YORK — Minnesota Vikings linebacker Jack Del Rio, from Hayward High, earned NFC defensive player of the week honors. Del Rio had nine tackles, a sack and a key interception in the Vikings' 21-17 win in Buffalo.

FOOTBALL

JUN - 3 1996

Hayward High grad Jack Del Rio, a linebacker released this past winter by the Minnesota Vikings, says he has agreed to a one-year contract with the Miami Dolphins and will sign today.

Del Rio loses out again in voting for Pro Bowl

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The biggest surprise for the Minnesota Vikings Thursday was not that Cris Carter, Warren Moon and three other players were selected to the Pro Bowl.

It was that one very deserving player was left out.

Middle linebacker Jack Del Rio, the leading tackler on the NFL's No. 1 run defense and a former Hayward High star, missed out on what would have been his first trip to the Pro Bowl. The Vikings were stunned, and Del Rio was badly disappointed.

Del Rio's seven interceptions are more than any linebacker over the past two seasons. "I have nothing to say," the 10-year veteran said before moving to an off-limits section of the locker room. Del Rio's teammates had plenty to say.

Kicker Fuad Reveiz, chosen to play in his first Pro Bowl, said it was the second year in a row Del Rio has been unfairly left off the team. Del Rio had his best pro season last year, with 169 tackles, and will top that mark this year.

"Jack deserves to be there,

There's more . . .

■ Pro Bowl rosters.

B-11

without a doubt," said Reveiz, who has made 22 consecutive field goals. "I've seen Jack passed over the last two years. How do you explain Del Rio not being there?"

Reveiz and Carter, who needs two catches against Detroit Saturday to break the NFL record for receptions in a season, will be among four Minnesota players starting the game Feb. 5 in Hawaii.

Del Rio, 31, was the NFC Player of the Month in September and leads the Vikings with 167 tackles and 108 solo stops. He has three interceptions and two sacks.

Dallas had 11 players selected, led by Emmitt Smith, Troy Aikman, Michael Irvin and Charles Haley.

Six Pittsburgh Steelers led the voting for the AFC squad, four of them starters: Dermontti Dawson on offense; and Rod Woodson, Carnell Lake and Greg Lloyd on defense.

Del Rio available FEB 14 1996

The Minnesota Vikings cut veteran line-backer Jack Del Rio, who went to Hayward High School.

Del Rio has played 11 seasons for New Orleans, Kansas City, Dallas and Minnesota. But the durable veteran was hobbled by a late-season knee injury last year. The team decided to let him go rather than pay him a \$750,000 roster bonus that was due at the end of the week, according to his agent Gary Uberstine.

He was scheduled to make \$850,000 more next season, and Uberstine said Del Rio will look for a similar package with a new team, one that is worth roughly \$1.5 million or \$1.6 million a year.

Dolphins release veteran Del Rio

AUG - 6 1996

WIRE REPORTS

DAVIE, Fla. — Calling it the most difficult roster decision of his career, Miami Dolphins coach Jimmy Johnson released linebacker Jack Del Rio on Monday.

"Jack is a true professional. He's intelligent, a competitor, and a team player," Johnson said.

The release of the 33-year-old former Hayward High star was made because of the solid play of rookie Zach Thomas, designated Monday as the starting middle linebacker.

Thomas led the team with eight tackles in last week's preseason opener against Tampa Bay and will get the starting nod again this week against Chicago.

"The bottom line is that Zach Thomas was making plays," Johnson said, adding: "Jack Del Rio would still be here and still be our starter were it not for the play of Zach Thomas."

Del Rio has played 11 seasons. He joined the Dolphins as a free agent after spending the previous four years in Minnesota. He was in his second tour with Johnson after playing for the coach from 1989-91 at Dallas.

"It's tough for a 12-year veteran at middle linebacker to go through double-day practices, especially at a tough camp like this one," Johnson said.

Meanwhile, Dolphins wide receiver Fred Barnett underwent reconstructive surgery to repair a torn ligament in his right knee.

JUN - 4 1996

□
Miami offensive tackle **Ron Heller** announced his retirement, and the Dolphins signed linebacker **Jack Del Rio** and quarterback **Bernie Kosar**.

Heller, a 12-year veteran, started seven games at right tackle in 1995. He went on the injured reserve list after having arthroscopic surgery on both knees Oct. 27. He played in 171 career games with 166 starts, including 39 starts with the Dolphins from 1993-95.

Del Rio was the starting middle linebacker the past four seasons for the Minnesota Vikings.

Kosar played in nine games and started two for the Dolphins last season. He completed 74 of 108 passes for 699 yards, with three touchdowns and five interceptions.

□

Del Rio rekindles love for football

TUE OCT - 4 1994

By Curt Brown

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL STAR TRIBUNE

MINNEAPOLIS — In its endless parade of awards, the NFL named Minnesota Vikings middle linebacker Jack Del Rio the NFC defensive player of the month.

Hard to argue with the choice. After all, Del Rio, a Hayward High grad, leads NFL linebackers with three interceptions, ranks second on the team with 59 tackles and is a key component in the Vikings' fourth-ranked run defense, which limited opponents to 69.4 yards a game on the ground.

While Del Rio is pleased with the honor, he insists his February, March and April were more valuable than his September. He spent every single day of the off-season sequestered in the steamy Austin Gym in Dallas, working out with Dallas defensive tackle Tony Casillas and his personal strength coach, Keith Whitley.

"I'm very pleased to be honored, but I earned this by paying the price in the off-season," Del Rio said. "I didn't miss one day working out. I lifted weights five days a week and ran two or three days."

He wasn't always so motivated. New Orleans drafted Del Rio in the third round 10 seasons ago. He had been an All-America player at Southern Cal and, frankly, wound up resting on his laurels his first few seasons.

"All this came really easy for me in college, and the first couple years I took everything for granted," he said.

He loafed, kicked back and lost his desire. "I fell out of love with it for a while," Del Rio said.

Not so coincidentally, New Orleans traded him to Kansas City for a fifth-round draft choice, and Kansas City cut him in '89.



ALAN GRETH — Staff

Enter Jimmy Johnson, the new coach of the Cowboys. Johnson plucked Del Rio off the waiver wire, and before long a love affair was rekindled.

"Jimmy Johnson gave me a chance, and I fell back in love with the game," Del Rio said. "Since then, I've played as hard as I can play every day, and my weight training has gotten better and better and better."

Del Rio, 31, has 8 percent body fat, and his off-season regimen has turned him into perhaps the Vikings' most durable player. He has started his past 81 games — 37 with the Vikings, 44 with Dallas — and has led the Vikings with 381 tackles since coach Dennis Green signed him among his first batch of free agents in '92.

Green has marveled at Del Rio's

Please see **Del Rio, B-3**

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and continually points out that he hasn't missed a practice since joining the Vikings. Dave Garnett and Pete Bercich, Del Rio's backups, are equally amazed.

"A lot of people have the tools to play middle linebacker in the NFL, but very few are smart enough," said Bercich, Del Rio's rookie understudy on the practice squad. "God has given Jack the gifts of natural ability, but what really impresses me the most is how he's a professor of the game."

Garnett wouldn't be surprised if Del Rio winds up coaching when his career ends.

"He definitely has the tools to be

a good coach," Garnett said. "He's our spiritual leader on defense and makes sure our minds are right. If not, he brings us back to where we need to be. He gets into the game plan, and when the situation arises he gets opportunistic. That's why he has all the interceptions this year."

Del Rio's three interceptions in five games, combined with four last season, make him the league's leading interceptor among linebackers the past two seasons.

"There's no question, I'm off to a great start," Del Rio said, deferring questions about his coaching future. "I've considered it, but right now I'm having fun playing it, so we'll see if I still have the desire to be in the game."